

## PAROLE NEWS

NOVEMBER, 2005

### Study: Ex-offenders Pay Back into the System

Last month marked the first anniversary of the Massachusetts Parole Board Regional Reentry Center (RRC) Initiative and already, employment seems to be on the rise among ex-offenders.

The ability to find employment is one of the key factors in decreasing recidivism among ex-offenders, and a key component of the RRC Initiative. With computer-based job finding systems such as JobQuest, Parole Board Director of Reemployment David F. Sullivan has been assisting parole officers in linking offenders to potential job opportunities.

So far, it seems to be working. A study released by the Parole Board this month shows that \$143,384.06 was

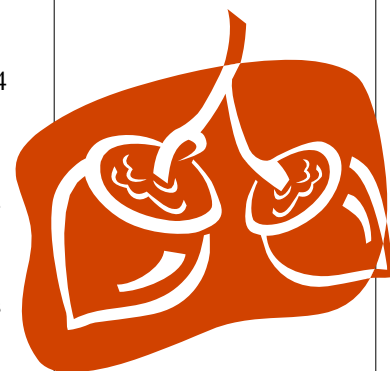
paid back into the system due to offender reemployment, marking a \$100,000 increase from last year (This is an approximate calculation which does not take into account deductions, such as children, marriage, and housing).

Using the JobQuest system, a wage analysis was conducted on the type of employment obtained by each ex-offender and the amount earned.

According to the study, 244 out of a total of 637 ex-offenders obtained employment between January, 2004 and June, 2005, earning a collective \$2,705,359.78 in wages. The study showed that 365 businesses, companies, and individuals hired ex-offenders. This analysis Did not include ex-offenders

Employed in other states, or those who are self-employed.

The majority of offenders were employed in the areas of waste management and removal services, food services, retail, construction, and manufacturing.



### "Reach for the Stars" Gives Women a Second Chance

In October, the Massachusetts Parole Board opened a new program designed to help female ex-offenders successfully enter back into the community. "Reach for the Stars," like a similar, but larger program for mostly male offenders, is funded through the Violent Offender Incarceration/Truth in Sentencing (VOI/TIS) grant. Both offer housing for four to six months, as well as

counseling and assistance finding employment and permanent housing.

Quincy Parole Officer Tina M. Hurley is responsible for providing support and surveillance for the women participating in the program. In addition to PO Hurley, the Parole Board Reentry Unit has also been involved in finding appropriate placements (continued on pg. 3)

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## Chairman's Column

### Parole Board Chairman, Maureen Walsh

During this busy holiday season, I would like to take this opportunity to thank each and every one of the employees of the Massachusetts Parole Board for their continuing effort and commitment to improving the agency. I continue to remain inspired and impressed by the level of commitment of the staff.

As far as recent updates, from my perspective I am happy to announce the following progress in the past months. First, recently the legislature passed a bill relating to the Interstate Compact which will provide Massachusetts with the ability to transfer adult offenders and work with all of the other states that are a member of this compact. As a result of this legislation, we will be strengthening our Interstate Compact unit as the new rules require tracking international database, particular requirements around the rendition of offenders and statistical information regarding those offenders moving into and out of Massachusetts that need to be supervised. I would expect that postings will occur in the near future for several positions in order to meet this need.

Secondly, we were recently notified by the National Governors Association that we are the recipient of another grant regarding reentry policy issues. As you may be aware, Massachusetts was one of seven states selected approximately 18 months ago to participate in a reentry policy academy. At the conclusion of the reentry policy academy the NGA identified the need for further expansion of several policy ideas and invited all states to submit proposals regarding their reentry challenges, successes, and barriers for consideration. The NGA reviewed these applications and Massachusetts was one of four states selected. We will be working with them in the upcoming months to continue to improve the reentry process and we are very excited to once again be involved in this worthwhile endeavor.

Third, during this past month I also had the opportunity to be present at the Family Justice Initiative led by Parole Officer Tina Hurley. This initial meeting included approximately 30 individuals both from within and outside of the agency representing various constituents including sheriff's departments, police departments and social service agencies. This is a very informative and unique opportunity that is being presented by the Parole Board. Once again Family Justice has been awarded a contract to work with the Parole Board to modify and change the way in which our agency addresses the needs of offenders with families. This initial meeting provided much information and we look forward to future successful meetings.

I am looking forward to seeing everyone on December 15th at our annual agency meeting in Worcester, where we will be able to provide further details about new positions that will be posted, budget issues, and future growth of this agency.

"This is a very informative and unique opportunity that is being presented by the Parole Board."

*-Parole Board Chairman Maureen E. Walsh, on the Family Justice initiative led by Parole Officer Tina Hurley*

(This is the first in a series of two articles about the Substance Abuse Coordinators (SAC's), featuring the SAC's from the Quincy, Mattapan, Framingham, and Lawrence Parole Offices.)

## Counselors Expand Parole's Capacity for Case Management

While the Massachusetts Parole Board has always assisted offenders in finding counseling and medical care, the agency took an extra step this summer, hiring licensed mental health counselors to work at each of the eight regional parole offices in Quincy, Mattapan, Worcester, Brockton, New Bedford, Springfield, Framingham, and Lawrence.

The new Substance Abuse Coordinators (SAC's) positions are part of the agency's Regional Reentry Center (RRC) Initiative.

Although it's not clear from their title, SAC's help parole clients with all medical and mental health concerns, including, but not (continued on pg. 5)



(back, from left) SAC Fred Sharp, Region 7, SAC Mary Liz Beach, Region 4, SAC Steve Bisson, Region 9, SAC Lisa Jean, Region 6, SAC Pamela Moore, Region 5. (front, left) Stephanie Coughlin, Reentry Unit Program Evaluator, SAC Desiree Huff, Region 2, SAC Suzanne Lyons, Region 8. (Missing, SAC Linda Mazak, Region 1)

Photograph by Kira Dunn

(VOI/TIS, continued from pg. 1) and collecting data on the women's progress. "The Reach for the Stars Program strives to create opportunities for change in the lives of women and their families," said PO Hurley.

The women's program furnishes 12-15 beds in Boston: with McGrath House, a program operated by Community Resources for Justice, and with Boston Rescue Mission, a faith-based organization which provides residential recovery programming, vocational development, and meal programs to the homeless.

Boston Rescue Mission operates 7 different case management programs, and has a total of 30 beds for women. The VOI/TIS beds have been full since the first week of November, said Program Director Mike Way.

To get into a VOI/TIS bed, the women have to be homeless, said Mr. Way. "We also look at mental health and behavioral issues, and substance abuse. We screen them carefully to see if we can accommodate them." All of the women in the program now have substance abuse issues, he said.

Women stay in the program for up to six months, or until they find stable housing and employment. During those six months, the women are provided with case management, and attend daily group meetings. In the first two weeks, the women complete a two-week orientation, where they are introduced into the community and develop a plan for recovery.

Wearing only their prison uniforms, one of the first things they needed was clothing.

"That was a bit of a challenge," said Mr. Way. "We had to get them winter clothing and winter coats." Mr. Way and his staff found the women what they needed at The Salvation Army and St. Francis House.

In addition, Boston Rescue Mission staff got them medication, free medical care, and vocational training. "Some are applying for jobs right now. When they graduate from the program, we want to make sure they have solid employment, savings, and a good place to live." So far, he reports, they are making some good progress.

At McGrath House, the VOI/TIS beds have been full since November 7, and the women seem to be doing well, said Program Director Deborah Camera. These women also have a history of substance abuse, said Ms. Camera. "They've been taking care of each other, using each other for support, taking it upon themselves to stick together," she said.

The women are assisted in looking for jobs and finding permanent housing. So far, one hurdle has been finding employment for women with disabilities. "That's one of the issues. We're setting them up with GED and computer classes," she said.

McGrath House has a total of 20 beds, five funded through the Census Reduction for Ex-offenders (CREO) program, and 10 prerelease. (McGrath House is run by the nonprofit agency Community Resources for Justice, which operates a total of 25 residential and day programs, serving more than 5,000 New Englanders annually)

## ***Parole Board Develops Agency-wide System of Response to Parole Violations***

The Massachusetts Parole Board has formed a working group to tackle the project of codifying the agency's system of graduated sanctions. The ultimate goal of this Responding to Parole Violations/Graduated Sanctions Parole program is to update the agency's policies and to create a training model for implementation. There is a need for change in the current system, because sanctions are not used consistently throughout the agency. "Differences in personal philosophy, supervision style, and interpretations of agency policy can generate unintentional disparities in violation responses," states the National Institute of Corrections handbook, *Responding to Parole and Probation Violations*. The Crime and Justice Institute, which is helping to facilitate the parole project, is using the handbook as a guide. Used on a case-by-case basis, graduated sanctions are designed to be both punitive and treatment-oriented. For example, a parole officer could give the parolee a warning ticket and refer him or her to a substance abuse coordinator for a first positive drug screen rather than send him back to prison.

"Part of the problem is that you can't go to one document," said Tim Zadai, who is part of a working group assigned to the project. "What we didn't have before was a range of sanctions for each violation....One region would do something one way, one would do it another. Chairman Walsh wanted to have a range of sanctions—to have some consistency and fairness," he said. "We just want to make sure that everyone has the same guidelines."

The new policies include a grid that allows parole officers to impose a response from a range of sanctions and interventions according to what his or her risk factor is and the severity of the violation.

Parole officers will factor in the risk of the offender, the severity of the violation, and performance on parole to determine a sanction and intervention. Parole supervisors and officers will still retain some discretion in their response to most parole violations. The working group of parole officers and other agency staff has conducted a thorough review of the agency's existing graduated sanctions policies, procedures, statutes, regulations, and other data.

The working group now includes all eight field supervisors for the planning and implementation of a pilot early next year.

A draft of the policies and procedures was submitted to the Executive Office of Public Safety on September 30 to satisfy the

requirements of the grant.

The working group will continue to revise and refine the policies prior to the pilot.

Two parole officers and a supervisor for each region will participate in the pilot, which will be monitored and evaluated by the Crime and Justice Institute.

The institute will submit a report to the Parole Board when the pilot is complete, and the Board will use this report to make changes prior to the statewide implementation of the new system.

The other members of the working group are:

Parole Board member, Deborah McDonagh (co-chairman), Region 8 Supervisor Richard Ryan (co-chairman), Region 7 Supervisor James McCarthy, Region 9 Supervisor John O'Connor, Hearing Examiner Joyce Hooley, Region 2 Parole Officer Matt Van Liere, Region 6 Parole Officer Bonnie McDonald, Region 1 Parole Officer Mike Bush, and Region 8 Reentry Officer George Valentgas. Policy, Development, and Training Coordinator Paul Gallagher joined the working group in August.

### ***Parole Officers Assist Hurricane Katrina Evacuees***

The Massachusetts Parole Board was one of several state agencies that stepped up to the plate last month to assist the residents of southern states hit hardest by Hurricane Katrina. Three parole staff: Parole Officer Tina Hurley from Region 1, Assistant Parole Supervisor Ray Chavaree from Region 8, and Institutional Parole Officer Gary Nevins from the Massachusetts Treatment Center, reported to the shelter at Camp Edwards/Otis Air National Guard Base in Bourne every day to assist in finding new homes for hurri-

of whom were relocating to Massachusetts.

Massachusetts opened up an evacuee receiving center at Otis, and the Legislature rushed through an emergency \$25 million appropriation for evacuee assistance.

There were 235 evacuees flown to the shelter, 100 of whom decided to relocate to Massachusetts. The remainder have relocated to other states or returned to Louisiana. The shelter was closed on October 24.

As of October 24, the state (continued on pg. 5)



(HURRICANE KATRINA continued from pg. 4)

has spent about \$4 million providing services to evacuees. Parole was one of many state agencies asked to assist in the post-disaster relief mission, and responded quickly. Officers were selected for the task by Parole Board Chairman Maureen E. Walsh and Executive Director Donald V. Giancioppo. The three dedicated staff put their jobs on hold to provide case management to the displaced victims.

"They needed some extra people down there to get the push on," said Ray. Help arrived from the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Mental Health, the Department of Correction, and the Department of Elderly Affairs, as well as other agencies and nonprofit organizations.

PO Hurley, IPO Nevins, and APS Chavaree began reporting to Camp Edwards on September 30. Ray spent most of his time working on the most difficult cases, assisting with basics like finding a job and a place to live, and working closely with representatives from the Department of Transitional Assistance.

PO Hurley worked closely with the Department of Elderly Affairs and the Department of Mental Health to assist older evacuees and those who were suffering from trauma.

"We basically said we're here to do anything," said Gary, who worked on fostering a link between evacuees relocating to Massachusetts with community organizations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and MassFaith-Helps. "We wanted to prevent them from going off to a strange community and not having any resources. Everyone who relocated to Massachusetts got a referral from one of those two organizations to help them adjust," said Mr. Nevins.

Ray noted that, as someone from the law enforcement community, it was nice to focus on the carrot more than the stick. "It was a very rewarding assignment. The effort down there was for the greater good of everyone. It felt good to do something 100 percent for the good of all," said Ray.

Part of his role was simply to provide moral support and gentle prodding to people who had lived through so much anguish.

"Sometimes in a traumatic situation, the decision making process isn't working. But there are a lot of crucial decisions to make, and we had to encourage them, to tell there's something you've got to do here and it can't wait," he said.

Parole's role was to pitch in, and to provide case management, said Ray. "We're resourceful in this agency, and if we don't have a clearly defined mission, we'll find it."

"I applaud Parole for taking the initiative to start something like this. It shows we're bridging the gap between punishment and therapy," -Region 1 Substance Abuse Coordinator  
Linda Mazak

(SUBSTANCE ABUSE COORDINATORS, continued from pg. 3)

limited to addictions. Linda Mazak, a licensed mental health and drug and alcohol counselor from SPAN works out of the Region 1, Quincy Parole Office. Ms. Mazak has been with SPAN for five years, working with the HIV-positive population in correctional facilities, providing intensive case management, substance abuse treatment, and medical care.

Her interest was piqued in working with the correctional population during an internship she held at the all-female prison, MCI-Framingham, while pursuing her Master's Degree in counseling and psychology from Cambridge College.

"I like working with this population," said Ms. Mazak. "I believe people should be accountable for criminal activity, but there are a lot of causes underlying that activity," she said. "No one has really asked them what is going on under there. When you start asking, it's amazing some of the things you hear. I applaud parole for taking the initiative to start something like this. It shows we're bridging the gap between punishment and therapy," she said.

Her parole clients tend to have a litany of issues that need addressing, including the most basic needs- clothing and temporary shelter.

"Usually people are willing to let down their defenses and tell you what's going on," she said. "And Parole is really interested in helping them find their way out there."

Desiree Huff, the SAC at the Region 2, Mattapan parole office, also works for SPAN. She and Ms. Mazak are working together to start a relapse prevention group for ex-offenders on Wednesday nights. The group will give people tools to resist alcohol and drugs when they encounter triggering situations.

Ms. Huff had been a case manager at SPAN for almost two years. She received her Master's in social work from Boston College and is now working towards obtaining her LCSW (Licensed Clinical Social Worker) license.

Like many of the other SAC's, Ms. Huff said the pace of work varies from one day to the next. Her clients are primarily parolees.

Finding housing and programming for sex offenders is difficult, she said. And if they don't have income or MassHealth, it makes it very challenging to get them the much needed counseling. "Then he has to wait until he has a job. He's stuck, and he's not getting treatment."

Like her colleague Ms. Mazak, Ms. Huff's interest in working for the offender population was sparked during an internship. "My first internship was working at the Nashua Street jail. That got me hooked."

For Steve Bisson, the SAC at the Framingham Parole office, becoming a counselor was the natural choice, since he's always been fascinated with human behavior. Originally from Canada, where he found mental health and substance abuse counselor jobs scarce, he

**Happy Birthday to  
the Regional  
Reentry Center  
Initiative,  
which celebrated its  
first birthday in  
October**



## **FEDERAL BONDS ENCOURAGE MA EMPLOYERS TO HIRE EX-OFFENDERS**

For employers concerned about hiring an ex-offender, the federal bonding program can sweeten the pill. The program provides up to \$5,000 in insurance for theft and other on-the-job crimes for employers who hire ex-offenders.

Although the bonds prove unnecessary about 99 percent of the time, they provide the employer with a sense of security, said Dave Sullivan, Parole Board Director of Reemployment and the federal bonding coordinator for Massachusetts. Bonds seem to be helpful "when the offender's right on the edge

(of getting the job), but the employer still has hesitation," he said.

***Bonds are most helpful when an offender is close to getting the job, but the employer still has hesitation, says Director of Reemployment, David F. Sullivan***

The bonding program seems to be gaining strength, as all 15 of the bonds issued to the Division of Career Services (DCS) for the year have been used, said Mr. Sullivan. "This is the first time all of the bonds have been used in Massachusetts," he said.

DCS used all 10 of the complimentary bonds they received from the US Department of Labor at the beginning of the year, and ordered five more, which they also used. Next year, DCS will order at least 25, said Mr. Sullivan. "We're looking now to see how we can purchase

more," he said. The bonds cost \$98 each.

Studies show that the inability to find a job is a major cause of

recidivism. Knowing this, the US Department of Labor to start the Federal Bonding Program in 1996. They made arrangements to purchase special Fidelity Bonds from the Aetna Casualty and Surety Company (now incorporated as Traveler's Property Casualty) that anyone who was at risk and formerly considered "not bondable."

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moved to Massachusetts, where he received a Master's degree in counseling psychology from Assumption College in Worcester.

Prior to joining his home agency, Advocates, Inc., Mr. Bisson worked as a mental health counselor at the Worcester House of Correction, where he conducted suicide watch and psychological evaluations.

"I feel like we do so much more than just substance abuse counseling," said Mr. Bisson, who helps parole clients with everything from finishing their GED to getting eyeglasses and "finding places to develop spirituality."

Lisa Jean, the SAC at the Lawrence office, was hired by Team Coordinating Agency after finishing a 10-month internship there.

Before her internship, Ms. Jean worked for 3 1/2 years at Keystone Hall, a halfway house and outpatient facility, as well as the Jackson House in Lawrence, a home for people with dual diagnosis, and the Glennis Sheehan Program, a halfway house for women. She received her Master's degree in counseling from Rivier College.

Ms. Jean has a personal stake in her work. Having been a bartender and married to someone who was a substance abuser, she saw firsthand the effects of drugs and alcohol.

"I got to see that part of it, people coming in and complaining that they don't have enough money for diapers, then spending money on drinks....I understand it, I don't look down on people. I have compassion for these people.

Helping an addict to reclaim his or her life makes her job worthwhile, said Ms. Jean. "You see how they look mentally and emotionally when they get their children back, their license back. Usually within a few months, people are feeling the rewards, like a cocoon going into a butterfly," she said.

*(Look for profiles of SAC's Liz Beach, Suzanne Lyons, Fred Sharp, and Pam Moore in the December newsletter)*